

How To Age Gracefully As A Believer

Series: How God Changes Our Attitudes

Do you worry about growing older?

What if I become dependent?

What if my spouse dies?

What if I contract Alzheimer's disease?

What if I end up in a nursing home?

What if _____?

What Does The Bible Say?

12 Wisdom belongs to the aged, and understanding to the old.

(Job 12:12 NLT)

We have a lot of false assumptions about getting older.

___ Senility inevitably accompanies old age.

___ Most old people are lonely and isolated from their families.

___ The majority of old people are in poor health.

___ Old people are more likely than younger people to be victimized by crime.

___ The majority of old people live in poverty.

___ Old people tend to become more religious as they age.

___ Older workers are less productive than younger ones.

___ Old people who retire usually suffer a decline in health and early death.

___ Most old people have no interest in, or capacity for, sexual relations.

___ Most old people end up in nursing homes and other long-term care institutions.

All of these statements are false. Yet many people have these fears.

7 For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline. (2 Timothy 1:7 NLT)

Trusting God is our only hope for our fears and worries.

What's more, it is essential for a healthy spiritual life as we grow older!

How Can You Obey?

12 But the godly will flourish like palm trees and grow strong like the cedars of Lebanon. 13 For they are transplanted to the Lord's own house. They flourish in the courts of our God.

14 Even in old age they will still produce fruit; they will remain vital and green. 15 They will declare, "The Lord is just! He is my rock! There is no evil in him!" (Psalm 92:12–15 NLT)

Old age should be a time when we are more productive for the Lord.

How can we be more productive for the Lord?

9 And now, in my old age, don't set me aside.

15 I will tell everyone about your righteousness. All day long I will proclaim your saving power, though I am not skilled with words. 16 I will praise your mighty deeds, O Sovereign Lord. I will tell everyone that you alone are just. 17 O God, you have taught me from my earliest childhood, and I constantly tell others about the wonderful things you do. 18 Now that I am old and gray, do not abandon me, O God. (Psalm 71:9, 15-18 NLT)

Look for opportunities to share your life's testimony.

Instead of considering retiring from something, consider retiring to something:

- **Mentor a younger man or woman**
- **Teach a Bible Study**

- **Start a ministry of helping people in need**

Additional Notes:

If you would like to use your home to disciple others, check out our training at www.crosswaveschurch.com/host. Cross Waves has produced short videos to train you how to use your home to reach others for Christ. So please check it out.

Explore:

Today's Insights to The Biblical World segment comes from the book, Heiser, M. S. (2018). Brief insights on mastering the bible: 80 expert insights on the bible, explained in a single minute (pp. 75–76). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Explore:

Life expectancy tables reflect “the expected age at death of the average individual, granting current mortality rates from disease and accidents.” When I was born in 1937, my life expectancy was 59.3 years, but now that I have lived to age 65, my life expectancy is almost 80 years. While such statistics are important to the life insurance industry, they are much less important to me. What is important to me is the fact that I am a temporal, finite being with a spiritual dimension that is eternal. Possessions in this life will have no lasting value for me, for none will accompany my spirit into eternity with God. This is surely why the Lord Jesus told us to treasure up things incorruptible (heavenly things), because our treasures are in our hearts (Matt. 6:19–21).

Petty, D. L. (2003). *Aging gracefully: keeping the joy in the journey* (p. 60). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

Explore:

Let me be very clear with my point: Growing old can be dangerous. The trail is treacherous and the pitfalls are many. One is wise to be prepared. You know it's coming. It's not like God kept the process a secret. It's not like you are blazing a trail as you grow older. It's not as if no one has ever done it before. Look around you. You have ample opportunity to prepare and ample case studies to consider. If growing old catches you by surprise, don't blame God. He gave you plenty of warning. He also gave you plenty of advice.

Lucado, M. (1999). *He Still Moves Stones*. Nashville: Word Pub.

Explore:

Contentment is a state of mind that evidences a simple, childlike trust in God. Consider Kevin, whose story came from my daughter-in-law just a few days ago through E-mail. Kevin is a six-foot-two, thirty-year-old man with the mind of a seven-year-old boy. His mental impairment, according to his family, resulted from complications at birth. Kevin's brother tells his story:

I remember wondering if Kevin realizes he is different. Is he ever dissatisfied with his monotonous life? Up before dawn each day, off to work at a workshop for the disabled, home to walk our cocker spaniel, returning to eat his favorite macaroni and cheese for dinner, and later to bed. The only variation in the entire scheme are laundry days, when he hovers excitedly over the washing machine like a mother with her new-born child. He does not seem dissatisfied. He lopes out to the bus every morning at 7:05, eager for a day of simple work. He wrings his hands excitedly while the water boils on the stove before dinner,

and he stays up late twice a week to gather our dirty laundry for his next day's laundry chores.

And Saturdays—oh, the bliss of Saturdays! That's the day my dad takes Kevin to the airport to have a soft drink, watch the planes land, and speculate loudly on the destination of each passenger inside. "That one's goin' to Chi-car-go!" Kevin shouts as he claps his hands. His anticipation is so great he can hardly sleep on Friday nights. I don't think Kevin knows anything exists outside his world of daily rituals and weekend field trips. He doesn't know what it means to be discontent. His life is simple. He will never know the entanglements of wealth or power, and he does not care what brand of clothing he wears or what kind of food he eats. He recognizes no differences in people, treating each person as an equal and a friend.

His needs have always been met, and he never worries that one day they may not be. His hands are diligent. Kevin is never

so happy as when he is working. When he unloads the dishwasher or vacuums the carpet, his heart is completely in it. He does not shrink from a job when it is begun, and he does not leave a job until it is finished. But when his tasks are done, Kevin knows how to relax. He is not obsessed with his work or the work of others. His heart is pure. He still believes everyone tells the truth, promises must be kept, and when you are wrong, you apologize instead of argue. Free from pride and unconcerned with appearances, Kevin is not afraid to cry when he is hurt, angry or sorry. He is always transparent, always sincere. And he trusts God.

Here is a man-boy who is content. We probably feel pity for Kevin, but don't we also feel a longing to be so trusting and pure? I believe that God can give us this kind of trust, and with it we can rise above the skepticism and pride that often come from relying too much on education and intellectual reasoning.

Though the native intelligence of Kevin and the apostle Paul are incomparable, their state of contentment is very similar. It's a matter of trust.

Petty, D. L. (2003). *Aging gracefully: keeping the joy in the journey* (pp. 110–112). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

Explore:

Or you can hear the voice of adventure—God's adventure. Instead of building a fire in your hearth, build a fire in your heart. Follow God's impulses. Adopt the child. Move overseas. Teach the class. Change careers. Run for office. Make a difference. Sure it isn't safe, but what is?

You think staying inside out of the cold is safe? Jesus disagrees. "Whoever tries to keep his life safe will lose it." I like the words of General Douglas MacArthur when he was seventy-eight: "Nobody grows old by merely living a number of years.

People grow old by deserting their ideals. Years may wrinkle the skin, but to give up interest wrinkles the soul.”

Lucado, M. (1999). He still moves stones. Nashville: Word Pub.

Question 1 of 5

When was the first time you specifically recall “the dawning of old age” in your own life? What happened? How does getting older make you feel?

Question 2 of 5

What fears of growing older do you have? How are you handling them?

Question 3 of 5

Why does growing older sometimes spawn regrets? Try to name some examples of this.

Question 4 of 5

What does it mean to you about retiring to something? Name some examples.

Question 5 of 5

When asked why he had taken up the study of Greek at the age of ninety-four, Oliver Wendell Holmes is reputed to have said, “Well, my good sir, it’s now or never.” What attitude do you suppose prompted Holmes to make such a statement? Do you admire him for it? Explain your answer.